Small Group Sermon Outline – June 28, 2015

Sermon: Blind Leading the Blind
Scripture: Mark 10:32-52

- Alex begins by talking about the request that James and John make of Jesus – they say that once Jesus has come into his glory, they want to sit at his right and left hand. To appreciate why they are making this request of Jesus, it’s important to understand that Jews who lived in Galilee during the first century had a strong sense that the end of world was coming soon. It was a commonly held belief that God would see their oppression and send the messiah. The messiah would then form a movement, which would culminate in God merging heaven with earth and making the messiah the new king who would rule the world with justice and fairness. Therefore, James and John obviously believe that Jesus is going to be the new king and they want to sit at Jesus’ right and left hand, positions of prominence in the king’s court.
  - Questions
    - Why do you think James and John are motivated to position themselves as the two most important people next to Jesus in God’s kingdom?
    - If you were Jesus, how would you respond to James and John’s request?

- Clearly, James and John don’t understand that being at Jesus’ right and left hand actually means they would be suffering the agony of crucifixion next to him. Their vision of God’s Kingdom looks a lot like the way the world works right now, with the major change being that they’re the ones in charge. So Jesus attempts to set them straight by saying “whoever wishes to become great among you must be your servant, and whoever wishes to be first among you must be slave of all.” But they refuse to hear it. They don’t want be a servant and a slave. They want power. If they’re giving up everything to follow Jesus, then they want to be rewarded in the end. Indeed, James and John don’t seem to care about Jesus’ version of the Kingdom. They only seem to be concerned with their own understanding of things.
  - Questions
    - Why do you think it’s so difficult for James and John to understand Jesus’ version of the kingdom?
    - Do you think if you were James or John that you would be willing sacrifice everything if there was no reward in the end?
    - How do you feel about Jesus’ statement that the greatest people in God’s kingdom are servants and slaves? How do you live out servanthood in your own life?

- Alex says that the mentality of James and John sounds a lot like the mentality of the modern church. In fact, this may be the reason why the disciples are portrayed as never understanding Jesus’ true intentions. Mark uses the disciples to make a commentary about the church. The church is very much like the disciples. We hear Jesus’ message over and over again, but it never seems to sink in because we’re always too focused on our own agenda. To make this point even clearer, right after this scene, Jesus heals a blind man named Bartimaeus, which literally means ‘son of honor.’ Mark is saying that the church is blind to Jesus’ teachings and if Christians want to find honor in God’s kingdom, they need to adhere to Jesus’ understanding of the Kingdom, not their own.
Questions

- Why do you think the church is such a poor reflection of Jesus’ teachings?
- Can you identify some places in your life where you blatantly ignore Jesus’ teachings in favor of your own agenda? Talk about Jesus’ teachings and how you intentionally go astray from that teaching.

Whenever you walk into a church, the message that you hear on Sunday morning is usually a reflection of the larger mentality of the church. Usually that message has little to do with Jesus’ actual teachings. There’s lots of other ways the church distorts Jesus’ message. Alex believes that one of the major ways the church has distorted Jesus’ message is by creating very specific belief structures. If you don’t believe everything that we say, word for word, then you have no place in our group. If you question even one of the basic tenets of the faith (say you question whether or not the Bible is inerrant, whether the earth was created in six days, or that Noah was able to house all the animals on the planet in his ark), then the members of that congregation will very quickly label you an outsider.

Questions

- Can you identify other ways that the church distorts Jesus’ message?
- Why do you think that churches tend to make a series of the beliefs the dividing line between inclusion and exclusion? Do you agree or disagree with this approach?

Jesus speaks directly against this mentality in this passage. Jesus says to James and John that they can be baptized and take communion, but that doesn’t mean that they understand his message. This is the downfall of many churches because it’s far easier to say you believe in something than it is to be required to act on those beliefs. Based on Jesus’ words in the gospels, Jesus seems to care a lot more about how we live than what we believe. It might be comforting for us to divide the church based on beliefs, but Alex believes the church was never intended to be a receptacle for a strict belief system. The church is a receptacle for people who are focused on serving others. Therefore, if First Pres is going to be a true reflection of Jesus’ teachings, then we need to be focused on living our lives as servants.

Questions

- What beliefs are important to you in your faith journey? If someone doesn’t believe what you believe, then does that mean they are not a Christian in your eyes?
- If a person doesn’t believe what you believe, yet they live the way Jesus asks them to live in the gospels, then how does that impact your understanding of whether or not they are a Christian?
- If a person does believe what you believe, yet they do not live the way Jesus asks them to live in the gospels, then how does that impact your understanding of whether or not they are a Christian?
- Why is servanthood such a challenge for so many of us in the church?